(d) by when the new scheme is going to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE): (a) According to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as on 31st March, 2002 the gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of Public sector banks stood at Rs. 53,600 crore (Provisional).

(b) to (d) Yes, Sir. RBI on 22nd March, 2002 had announced for public sector banks a special One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme for loans to small and marginal farmers with principal amount outstanding upto Rs. 50,000 which became NPAs as on 31st March, 1998. As per the scheme, principal outstanding as on 31st March, 1998 would be recovered and interest to be waived. The amount of settlement is to be paid in one lump sum. However, in deserving cases the banks may consider recovering the settlement amount in instalments with down payment of at least 25% at the time of settlement and the balance amount to be recovered within one year. The scheme shall remin operative upto 31st December, 2002.

Printing of five rupee note

672. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have discontinued low denomination notes some time back due to their high cost of production and low life span;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government have again started printing of five rupee notes;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor and the cost of printing of each note *vis-a-vis* coin of same denomination;

(d) whether the Government propose to consider the option of plastic currency as in some neighbouring countries; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANT GANGARAM GEETE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Printing of Rs. 5/- denomination bank notes has been resumed during 2001-02 to meet the shortage of Rs. 5 coins. Cost of production of a Rs. 5 Bank Note varies between 34.5 Paise to 78 Paise in different Bank Note Presses.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Printing trial and laboratory tests have determined that polymer substrate has a number of deficiencies and is not suitable for printing of bank notes.

IDBI Loan to Essar Group of Companies

673: SHRI AMAR SINGH
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether as reported in the Asian Age of July 1, 2002 Indian Financial Institutions specially the IDBI, have doled out an estimated Rs.11,053 crore to the ESSAR group;

(b) if so, whether Government have caused a probe into the basis on which the IDBI and other FIs had written off such astronomical amounts as bad debts, and to trace where the money had gone; if so, the outsome thereof giving Institution-wise and Bank-wise details of the bad debts written off; and

(c) what action has been taken and is being taken against the players in the siphoning the huge sums of money?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANT G ANGARAM GEETE): (a) to (c) According to the information provided by the Financial Institutions, the aggregate outstanding assistance from the domestic financial Institutions to the Eassar Group of Companies i.e. Essar Oil Ltd. Essar Power, Essar Steel Ltd., Essar Shipping Ltd. and HyGrade Pellets Ltd. is Rs. 7,138 crores. No loans to the Group have been written off by the domestic financial institutions. In accordance with the practice and usages customary amongst the banks and in conformity with the provisions of statutes governing the financial institutions as also the provisions of The Public Financial Institutions (Obligation As to Fidelity and Secrecy) Act,